

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7086

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 345

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS NG

SUBJECT: PAO RECALL

REF: STATE 20094 AND NIAMEY 287

1. PRESIDENT DIORI RECEIVED ME LATE EVENING FEBRUARY 1. OUMAROU YOUSOUFOU WAS AGAIN PRESENT BUT REMAINED SILENT DURING MEETING.

2. FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS (REFTELS) I STATED USG POSITION ON RECALL. WHEN I SPOKE OF ABSENCE OF ADEQUATE EXPLANATION FOR LOSS OF CONFIDENCE AND THAT USG THEREFORE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND BASIS FOR REQUEST FOR MCHALE'S WITHDRAWAL, PRESIDENT INTERRUPTED ME AND SAID HE HAD PURPOSELY AVOIDED GOING INTO DETAILS SINCE HE ASSUMED THE USG AFTER WORKING CLOSELY WITH HIM FOR MANY YEARS TRUSTED HIS JUDGMENT AND WOULD ACCEPT THAT IF HE SAID HE HAD LOST CONFIDENCE IN SOMEONE, THERE WERE ADEQUATE REASONS. SINCE THE USG WAS PRESSING FOR PARTICULARS, HE WOULD ENUMERATE SOME REASONS FOR HIS LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN MCHALE.

3. HE AGAIN REFERRED TO MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER. HE THEN SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY A JOURNALIST (UNNAMED) THAT MCHALE HAD CRITICIZED HIM (PRESIDENT) INTER ALIE FOR SPENDING MUCH TIME OUTSIDE OF THE COUNTRY INSTEAD OF CONCENTRATING ON WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE IN NIGER. DIORI ASKED WHETHER IT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PAO TO CRITICIZE THE PRESIDENT OF

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NIGER TO A JOURNALIST EVEN IF CRITICISM IN SOME CASES MIGHT BE MERITED. WITHOUT GIVING ME A CHANCE TO RESPOND, HE CITED ANOTHER INSTANCE. DIORI SAID HE HAD LEARNED FROM SEVERAL SOURCES, INCLUDING AMERICANS, THAT MCHALE HAS FOR SOME TIME

BEEN SPEAKING TO VISITORS, JOURNALISTS AND RESIDENTS IN A CRITICAL FASHION OF GON'S ALLEGED INDIFFERENCE TO PLIGHT OF TOUAREGS FROM MALI. PRESIDENT WAS EMPHATIC IN SAYING HE WAS NOT INDIFFERENT TO PLIGHT OF ANY GROUP HIT BY DROUGHT, BUT NIGER DID NOT HAVE ADEQUATE MEANS TO TAKE CARE OF ALL THE PEOPLE HIT BY THE DROUGHT. HE SAID HE HAS CONCENTRATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S MEAGER RESOURCES ON HELPING NIGERIENS AND ASKED WHETHER MCHALE HAD SEEN PVTIFUL CONDITION OF NIGERIEN TOUAREGS AND PEUHLS IN CAMPS AROUND AGADEZ OR MARADI. AS FAR AS MALIENS ARE CONCERNED, INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AND PRIVATE FOREIGN GROUPS, AS WELL AS NIGER RED CROSS, HAVE BEEN ASKED TO HELP THEM SINCE GON UNABLE TO DO MUCH. PRESIDENT SAID GON COOPERATING FULLY AND FACILITATING EFFORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HELP MALIENS. PRESIDENT AGAIN ASKED WHETHER IT WAS RESPONSIBILITY OF PAO TO CRITICIZE GON TO OUTSIDERS REGARDING RELIEF TO NOMADS. HE SAID IF USG CRITICAL OF GON, THERE ARE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS TO DISCUSS MATTER, BUT THESE CHANNELS DO NOT INCLUDE STATEMENTS BY PAO TO VISITORS.

4. I SAID I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF ALLEGED REMARKS BY MCHALE TO JOURNALIST AND ASKED WHETHER THEY WERE EITHER MISCONSTRUED OR MALICIOUSLY INTENDED. PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD NO REASON TO DOUBT ACCURACY. IN REFERENCE TO MALIEN TOUAREGS I SAID WE WERE ALL DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT CONDITION OF ALL NOMADS IN NIGER AND WE DESIRED GON TO HELP THEM WITHOUT DISTINCTION AS TO NATIONALITY SINCE OUR AID IS GIVEN ON THAT BASIS. I SAID THAT MCHALE HAD PERSONSLY DONATED MUCH TIME AND MONEY TO HELPING THE MALIENS, BUT THAT HE AS FAR AS I KNEW HAD NOT CRITICIZED THE NIGER GOVERNMENT IN RESPECT TO THE NOMADS.

5. PRESIDENT SAID HE DID NOT WISH SPEAK FURTHER ON SUBJECT. HE REPEATED HE HAD NOT THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO GO INTO DETAILS FOR LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN MCHALE, BUT SINCE USG SEEMED TO QUESTION HIS REASONING, HE FELT OBLIGED TO SHOW HE HAD ADEQUATE BASIS. PRESIDENT RETURNED TO QUESTION OF CULTURAL CENTER BY SAYING HE FULLY ACCEPTED USG ASSURANCES THAT MIMEO MACHINES WERE USED WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE OF US OFFICIALS AND THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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STRICTER CONTROLS WERE NOW IN FORCE. HE ENDED DISCUSSION BY SAYING HE HOPED USG WOULD SOON SEND REPLACEMENT FOR MCHALE AND THAT INCIDENT WOULD NOT HARM EXCELLENT RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES.

6. COMMENT: PRESIDENT DIORI CONSIDERS INCIDENT CLOSED. HE BELIEVES HE HAS ADEQUATE JUSTIFICATION FOR ASKING MCHALE WITHDRAWAL. I CANNOT COMMENT FURTHER ON STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CONCERNING JOURNALIST'S ALLEGED REMARKS. I HAVE DISCUSSED MATTER WITH MCHALE AND HE CANNOT RECALL ANY SPECIFIC CRITICISM OF PRESIDENT TO JOURNALISTS OR WITHIN COMMUNITY AT LARGE. CONCERNING STATEMENTS ATTRIBUTED TO MCHALE ABOUT MALIEN CAMP, I CAN ADD ONLY THAT MCHALE HAS BEEN ACTIVE FOR SOME TIME IN

TRYING TO ALLEVIATE DEPRIVATION AND SUFFERING THROUGH
PERSONAL DONATIONS AND DISTRIBUTION OF AID. I DO NOT KNOW
TO WHAT EXTENT HIS HUMANITARIAN CONCERN FOR THE PLIGHT OF THE
MALIENS HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO THE PRESIDENT AS IMPLIED CRITICISM
OF THE GON. PAO, HOWEVER, BY NATURE OF HIS POSITION, HAS BEEN
BESIEGED BY REQUESTS FROM VISITING JOURNALISTS, BEGINNING WITH
CARL ROWAN AND TEAM IN AUGUST, FOR ASSISTANCE IN BACKGROUND
BRIEFINGS AND ON-THE-SPOT VISITS TO NOMAD CAMPS. JOURNALIST
CONCLUSIONS HAVE BEEN FREQUENTLY CRITICAL. PRESIDENT MAY BE
JUDGING MCHALE GUILTY BY ASSOCIATION. MY LATEST MEETING
WITH PRESIDENT REVEALS HIS AND GON'S CURRENT HYPERSENSITIVITY
REACHING BEYOND STUDENT/TEACHER ISSUE.
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